DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 032 272 SP 003 055

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Teacher Workload and Teacher Dropout. QuEST Papers Series, #5.
American Federation of Teachers, Washington, D.C.
Pub Date 69
Note-11p.
Available from-American Federation of Teachers, Department of Research, 1012 14th Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005 ($0.20)
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.65
Descriptors-Professional Recognition, Teacher Morale, *Teacher Persistence, Teacher Shortage, *Teaching Load

Aside from poor salaries and fringe benefits, the basic causes of teacher dropout are frustration and lack of status, both of which are greatly dependent on teacher workload. Components of workload are (1) a rigid school day and 35-hour week differing from freer patterns in higher-status occupations; (2) oversize classes which reduce teaching effectiveness thus increasing job dissatisfaction; (3) the lack of authority and facilities to deal with disruptive students and those disadvantaged by social class or reading ability; and (4) forced extracurricular activities and nonclassroom assignments which dissipate professional talent and energy. Many who leave teaching go not to private industry but to nonteaching jobs in education where salaries are only slightly higher but the wear-and-tear factors more favorable. Collective bargaining contracts have done little to change workload because even slight improvements are expensive. (To establish a four-period instructional day and a 25-pupil class size limit would require doubling the present workforce.) Attempted remedies have included demonstration programs (which may solve problems but double costs) and less expensive but not entirely successful team teaching and modular programing experiments. The use of paraprofessionals holds more promise, but better teacher organizations must be built to produce funds at all levels of government and to establish a system of priorities aimed at making teaching more attractive and productive. (JS)

ED032272

AFT QuEST Paper 5. Occassional Papers from the AFT Program for Quality Educational Standards in Teaching (QuEST)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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TEACHER WORKLOAD AND TEACHER DROPOUT

By

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I. INTRODUCTION

Teaching does not seem like a hard job. To a 9-5 office or production worker, the hours look good and those summer vacations and winter and spring holidays are the best anywhere. Yet hundreds of thousands of teachers are drained and exhausted at the end of the day, and every year many are driven from the classroom altogether because of overwork. What are the factors which often make a comparatively easy-looking job a bugbear in reality?

In Volume XXXV, No. 23, of the *Weekly Bulletin* of the Toledo (Ohio) Federation of Teachers (1968), the following comments appeared under the heading "Freedom to be Creative:"

> As the Toledo Schools are presently organized, teachers are usually involved in a teaching role almost all the time school is in session. The individual classroom practitioner's range of freedom, therefore, is severely limited, because all of his time is accounted for and almost all of his activities involve students.
>
> He is placed in a classroom that normally is isolated and insulated from other classrooms; he teaches and plans alone, except for the probationary practitioner who is occasionally graced with an ominous visit from his supervisor or building principal. He has few opportunities to see what else is happening in his school or how other teachers are meeting their problems, because unilaterally, pre-established patterns of time make class intervisitation, *much less common planning*, almost impossible.
>
> It is in this unhappy context that administrators tell the teacher: "Innovate, be imaginative, try out new ideas, and experiment with new materials."
>
> Such pronouncements are not only absurd; they are hypocritical. If it is absolutely necessary that the teachers of Toledo have the courage to break new ground to reach the individual student, *then we must demand the opportunity, the help*, and *the autonomy* to do so.

Few teachers are physically "sweated" in the classic sense that miners, garment workers, and others were overworked when the 12-hour-day-6-day-week was in vogue. Aside from poor salaries and fringe benefits, frustration and lack of status, rather than physical overexertion, are the basic causes of teacher dropouts. But, since the workload of a teacher has a great deal to do with whether or not he can succeed in his endeavors, overload certainly is a major cause of teacher frustration. Also, onerous workloads are a traditional index of low status in society. Lack of status of teachers within

the educational enterprise lowers their toleration levels for other aspects of the teaching role-function.

II. TEACHER WORKLOAD ANALYZED

Before going on to discuss the relationship between teacher workload and teacher dropout in detail, a few comments should be made about the various components of teacher workload. These components are:

1) School day.

2) Instructional hours per day and per week.

3) Number of pupils each instruction hour.

4) Receptivity of pupils.

5) Extracurricular activities and nonclassroom assignments.

School Day

Most elementary and secondary school teachers in the United States put in a 5-day-7-hours-a-day school week. Not all of a teacher's school time is spent teaching children or even supervising them in study situations. Nevertheless, the almost unvarying practice is to require the teacher to sign into the school building in the morning and to remain in the building, except possibly for lunch, until sign-out time at the end of the school day.

The required school day imposes an important status-limiting factor at the very outset in the work situation of elementary and secondary school teachers. It stands in contrast to the freer customs prevailing in higher-status occupations. College teachers, for instance, meet their classes but are otherwise free to come and go as they please. Principals and other administrative personnel usually keep regular hours, in order to carry on their work effectively and for morale purposes, but they frequently leave their schools for reasons which would be unacceptable if applied to a teacher. It is certainly no physical hardship to work 35 hours a week, yet the firm work week emphasizes the fact that elementary and secondary school teachers have more nearly the status of production employees than that of professionals.

Instructional Hours per Day and per Week

Within the confines of the average 35-hour school week, there are many variations in instructional hours even among teachers who are carrying a full classroom load without compensatory time for administrative or other nonclassroom duties. Most elementary school teachers are required to supervise their pupils throughout the school day, for instance. For many, this even includes the lunch period. On the other hand, secondary school teachers customarily receive at least one "free" period a day, although there are massive exceptions to this standard. Some teach six or seven periods a day with time off only for lunch. Junior high school teachers tend to work more instructional hours than senior high school teachers.

Again, as in the case of the hourly work week, the instructional work week of elementary and secondary school teachers reveals a marked difference in their status from that of college teachers.

The standard instructional week for a college teacher is now 9 hours, and only a few, mostly in junior colleges, teach as many as 12 hours. This instructional time-load is justified by the concept that a college teacher is expected to engage in research, study, and preparation of materials for publication. The obvious corollary of this proposition is that elementary and secondary school teachers are *not* expected to carry on research, study, or thoughtful writing. Teachers are regarded as hourly workers and they are also hooked into an educational assembly line in a way which directly conflicts with the concept of "professional employment." The high workload of elementary and secondary school teachers prevents them from being truly professional. It lowers their status and accelerates teacher dropout.

The instructional hours component of teacher workload, however, goes beyond mere status satisfaction or the lack of it. Instructing children under "normal" circumstances for 4 to 5 hours a day (class periods vary from 45 to 55 minutes) may not seem like arduous work. But even if this common supposition were true, which it is not, it is becoming more and more difficult to find a "normal" teaching environment. The apparently attractive 4- to 5-hour instructional day can be almost as grueling as a day on a chain gang if the other variables are not favorable.

Number of Pupils Each Instructional Hour

Next to instructional hours, class size is the most significant aspect of teacher workload. It is harder to teach more pupils than fewer pupils, other things being equal. There are more papers to correct, more remedial problems, and more discipline problems in large classes than in smaller classes, quite apart from the effect on pupil achievement.

When the pathmaking New York City teacher collective-bargaining contract of 1962 was being negotiated, the negotiators for the board of education insisted that the size of a class assigned to a teacher was a management prerogative so long as the teacher was not subjected to undue hardship. That is, if the teacher was physically able to cope with the number of pupils sent to his classroom, he had no cause for complaint.

The union's position was, and still is, that the size of a class is an important working condition irrespective of whether or not the teacher is able to survive. Classes too large for optimum teaching effectiveness reduce job satisfaction and increase frustration. Furthermore, oversize classes affront a teacher's self-concept as a professional because trying to teach an oversize class smacks of shoddy practice.

Although research on the effect of class size on pupil achievement is inconclusive, most teachers are convinced that they can do a better job with a small class than with a big one. Although school administrators have been slower to accept this premise, perhaps because they are more concerned with the school budget (smaller classes require larger staffs), most of them will concede the point. Thus, when teachers are required to teach classes larger than they deem educationally sound, a sense of powerlessness and statusless-ness is generated.

At the secondary school level, oversize classes bear more heavily on some teachers than others. Teachers whose classes require a great deal of outside preparation, such as science teachers, or generate a heavy paper-correcting load, such as English teachers, are more put upon than others. In vocational shops, where equipment must be used individually by students, much more teacher supervision is required for safety reasons, if for no other, and oversize classes become both dangerous and difficult to manage.

As previously mentioned, one of the chief effects of oversize classes is an increase in student discipline problems and a consequent decrease in teacher effectiveness. An additional unfortunate byproduct very often is an increase in teacher authoritarianism.

Receptivity of Pupils

The basic receptivity of pupils to learning probably has more to do with the realities of teacher workload than any other single factor. One of the principal demands of the New York City United Federation of Teachers in the 1967 contract negotiations was for increased authority of teachers to remove disruptive pupils from their classrooms. Although this demand was exploited by anti-union forces as "proving" that the union was opposed to black children, the need for more control over pupil behavior is a nationwide theme among teachers, regardless of the racial composition of their classes.

There are, of course, psychological factors which make a disruptive child hard for a teacher to bear. Rebels are never popular with those in authority. But, quite beyond this, the presence of even one or two children who constantly require special attention can make a classroom a torture chamber almost unbearable for a teacher.

Pupil behavior is only one aspect of pupil receptivity, of course. Pupils from middle-class homes who come equipped with a set of middle-class aspirations are, as a rule, more receptive to school work -- much of the value of which must simply be taken on faith by the pupil. Success in school is believed by middle-class parents and children to be essential for success in later life. Pupils who have a general faith in society are more apt to have faith in its institutions, including schools and teachers. But ghetto children who often have a cynical or suspicious view of society in general, or who see no relation between success in school and success in the society they know, are apt to be less receptive than middle-class pupils to school learning.

Finally, since much of schoolwork depends on reading ability, and background information acquired through reading, a child from a community which places a high value on reading is apt to be more receptive to schoolwork than a child who comes from a community whose mode of life emphasizes physical activity and expression.

Quite obviously, more effective measures must be taken to improve pupil receptivity, particularly in slum schools. Hundreds of thousands of idealistic, dedicated, hard-working young teachers enter these schools each year. Yet, only the most talented can surmount the difficulties they encounter, and if the average (but essential) teachers cannot locate other teaching jobs

where their chances of success are better, they often become dropouts from the profession.

Extracurricular Activities and Nonclassroom Assignments

There are signs that the long struggle of teachers to eliminate forced extracurricular overload is all but won. Increasingly, extracurricular assignments are paid and noncompulsory. (To some extent, federal funds provided under ESEA have accentuated this trend.) To the extent that teachers are still required to handle extracurricular assignments on a compulsory, nonpaid basis, they do increase the workload of teachers, of course.

On the other hand, the problem of nonclassroom administrative and policing assignments during the school day continues to be a serious source of overload. Ironically, since elementary school teachers have no more than one nonclassroom period a day, at best, the problem is less severe at this level than in secondary schools. Even here, however, teachers more often than not are required to police halls, lunch rooms, yards, and school bus stops, and perform a long list of clerical and custodial chores unrelated to teaching.

A typical secondary school operates on a 7-period day plus lunch. For most urban high school teachers, five of these periods are scheduled for classroom instruction, one is an unassigned or "free" period, and one is used for hall policing, toilet policing, study-hall supervision, record keeping, and other noninstructional tasks. Many of these nonteaching assignments are particularly enervating and tension-ridden. Anyone who has ever tried to ride herd on an auditorium or cafeteria full of 10th graders engaged in what is euphemistically called a study period knows the truth of this statement.

Junior high schools are notoriously overloaded with these nonteaching chores, and, in addition, the pupils require more supervision than those in senior highs.

No other professional worker is called upon to dissipate his talent and energy on nonprofessional work. Only teachers are expected to be skilled and creative, and to carry on routine clerical, policing, and housekeeping tasks as well.

III. PUSHOFFS, PULLOUTS, DROPOUTS, AND NEVER-INS

The foregoing analysis of teacher workload suggests two major reasons -- frustration and lack of status -- why prospective teachers shun the profession, even though there is little or no research to show the adverse effects of teacher workload on the supply of teachers. Nevertheless, it may be worthwhile to speculate about this.

Is there a teacher shortage in the U. S.? Quite obviously there is; not only one shortage, but two of them. One is the obvious, apparent shortage of qualified candidates for existing teaching positions. In spite of the fact that districts using competitive examinations and The National Teacher

Examination have virtually given up all pretense to selectivity in the hiring of teachers, many teaching positions go unfilled throughout each school year. Many other positions are filled by a parade of temporary teachers who handle the class for a month or so until a better job can be found.

Beyond the apparent shortage is a second, hidden shortage created by the failure of local, state, and national governments to face up to the true needs of education in American society by budgeting enough positions in the first place. Children need small classes, well-educated teachers, and teachers who have time to think and prepare for their classes. Under prevailing staffing ratios, only the most favored suburban school districts can achieve this goal.

However, if we consider only the apparent shortage of teachers, to what extent is teacher workload a causative factor? The two chief reasons usually given to explain why teaching cannot attract very many people from the upper third of college graduating classes, and cannot hold highly capable individuals who enter teaching, are low salaries and matrimony. Teachers are thought to be *pulled* out of classrooms rather than *pushed* out by the intolerable or discouraging conditions. While no one can deny that a man who can look forward to making $25,000 - $30,000 in private industry would not be tempted by the current $12,000 - $15,000 teaching salary maximum, and while we must also agree that love is not subject to control by boards of education, even these pullout factors may be reinforced by pushout pressure from excessive teacher workloads.

Actually, people who train to become teachers do not have the same employment options of those who train to become engineers, business executives, or scientists, and it is quite possible that the pulling power of private industry as a cause of teacher shortage has been exaggerated. The underground railroad out of the classroom, more often than not, terminates in a nonteaching job within education or allied services. Many a capable teacher is pushed out of a classroom by intolerable working conditions only to find his way into counseling, coordinating, consulting, researching, or administering in another part of the enterprise. Very often these noncombatant jobs pay very little more than teaching; the difference lies in the more favorable wear-and-tear factors. Improvement in teacher workload might keep these talented people on the educational production line.

Similarly, it is quite possible that a more enjoyable on-the-job experience might cause many women teachers to delay starting their families and to return to teaching sooner once their families have been given a fair start in life.

Finally, an imponderable factor in the teacher shortage must be mentioned. There is really no telling how many prospective teachers are repelled by accurate perception of what lies in store for them once they accept a teaching position. Most prospective teachers have romanticized notions about what they are going to be able to do for humanity once they get in a room alone with 30 - 40 children. The realities of classroom life are often a rude shock, but more and more the truth about teaching has permeated the public domain. It is reasonable to believe that thousands and thousands of prospective teachers are neither pushouts, pullouts, or dropouts. They are neverins.

IV. NOSTRUMS AND REMEDIES

From the foregoing description, certain remedies for the more onerous aspects of teacher workload begin to suggest themselves.

For decades, the pattern of teacher workload remained virtually unchanged in most school systems. Beginning with the collective-bargaining era of the '60s, however, changes in prevailing teacher-workload practices began to emerge. Collective-bargaining contracts, whether negotiated by the AFT or an NEA affiliate, now customarily contain limitations on school day, school year, class size, extracurricular assignments, and nonteaching school day assignments, and many also have classes designed to aid teachers in maintaining student discipline.

Despite promising beginnings, however, the demands and supportive rationale for most bargaining efforts have been peculiarly modest and unimaginative in the area of teacher workload. The chief reason for this cautious approach is the undeniable fact that even slight improvements in workload are extremely expensive, and to win such improvements teachers would have to bring much more power to the bargaining table than they now do.

A rough computation of the number of added teachers it would take to establish a 4-period instructional day and an absolute upper limit of 25 pupils on class size indicates that the teacher workforce of the nation would have to be doubled! This calculation gives no consideration to the host of additional personnel which would be needed if teachers were required to be in school only when their classes were in session. Nor does it take into account the increase in remedial, guidance, and psychological personnel and other special facilities needed to improve pupil receptivity to learning.

It is apparent that in most school districts management and teacher representatives have entered into an unwitting conspiracy. It is easier and less expensive to solve teacher shortages by raising salaries and fringe benefits than by making the job itself more attractive.

More Effective Schools

One notable exception to the path-of-least-resistance approach is the movement toward "More Effective Schools." The essence of the MES approach is improvement of teaching/learning conditions. The More Effective Schools plan was originally designed by the New York Union in response to a proposal by the board of education to pay teachers in ghetto schools a $1,000-a-year bonus for not dropping out. The union demanded that the $2 million contemplated as bonus money be used, instead, to set up 10 demonstration schools. With the aid of fortuitous circumstances, the superintendent and the board of education went along with the idea.

The More Effective Schools plan is confined to elementary schools at present. Class size is limited to 22 pupils and there are four teachers for every three classes, thus permitting more free time during the day than in other elementary schools. Saturation remedial, guidance, and psychological services are provided. Teachers in other ghetto schools are frozen into their positions, except for a limited number permitted to transfer each

year, yet, even though teachers serve in ME schools on a voluntary basis, teacher turnover in the More Effective Schools is much less. Even more important, of course, is the fact that student achievement in the More Effective Schools is measurably higher than in comparable ghetto schools. This last assertion emerges from the latest research, contrary to some of the previous studies of pupil achievement.

There is no question but that More Effective Schools could be designed on the intermediate and high school levels, and as the More Effective Schools movement spreads across the country, some districts have attempted to institute such adaptations.

Still, the per-pupil cost in ME schools is almost double that in other elementary schools, almost entirely due to reduced workload.

Improving Workload Without Money?

Is there any cheap way to improve teacher workload significantly? Probably not, if we are talking about the drastic improvements needed to preserve our schools as viable social institutions. The proponents of the MES approach, for instance, have had to fight fiercely to prevent a watering down of the program. There is always a temptation by school administrators to try cheap educational shortcuts. Just as automobile manufacturers have reduced the strength of various parts of their product, even at the expense of safety, in order to cut production costs, so superintendents are inclined to remove a teacher here, a social worker there, and a guidance counselor somewhere else, to see if a successful, high-staffed school will run without these essential elements.

Budget motivation is responsible for many of the recent innovative efforts to teach faster without speeding up the flow of money. The amount of ESEA funds, spread over the nation, has not permitted significant improvement in basic determinants of educational quality, such as class size, supportive services, and massive teacher reeducation. But after three years of nationwide "innovation," it is safe to say that less than half a dozen (to be generous) workable new ideas have been discovered to enable our schools to teach more with less money. Most students of the subject now agree that even labor-saving, computerized education -- assuming this is desirable from a human standpoint -- is at least 10 years away from having any mass effect on educational productivity.

Team teaching and modular programming are two other highly touted staff-saving approaches to the workload problem which have not fulfilled their original promise. The basic idea here is to pile up students in extra-large sections in the areas of instruction where large-group instruction does not reduce the effectiveness of the teacher, thus permitting small-group instruction where personalized teaching is essential. The spread of these ideas has been slow, partly because schools are not built to permit this style of instruction, and partly because staffs are not accustomed to the close coordination required, but mainly because achievement results have not shown a compelling reason for adopting these newer modes.

Incidentally, real team teaching requires experience -- rather hard to accumulate under present teacher-turnover rates.

Use of Teacher Assistants

One innovative approach to reduction of teacher workload and simultaneous improvement in teaching/learning conditions has some promise, however. This is the increased use of teacher assistants and other nonprofessional personnel. Two million more adults must be added to the educational workforce in order to reduce teacher workload to proper professional levels. Since the total available U.S. workforce is somewhere around 80 million, and since other professions and highly technical industries also need intellectual workers, it is unrealistic to expect that any large proportion of the increase in educational staff can be fully certificated teachers. Hence, provision of assistants is the quickest and most economical way to increase the educational workforce, and to reduce teacher workload, but some precautions in the use of teacher assistants should be pointed out.

Paraprofessional personnel should work under the direction and supervision of teachers. Career opportunities should be provided so that teacher assistants can, through a work-study program, achieve teacher status. The position of "teacher" should be stabilized by standardizing the requirements for gaining the title. Introducing a system of ranks into what is now a one-level profession should be avoided because a rank system substitutes competition between teachers for cooperation among teachers, and it opens the way to all sorts of administrative favoritism.

Teachers, in consultation with community representatives, should control curriculum, initiation of instruction, and evaluation of instruction and pupil achievement.

Establishing Priorities

Since any significant improvement in the workload of teachers will be expensive, increased financial support will be necessary, and it would be unrealistic to think that total improvement could be achieved in one or two years. What *can* be done is to build better teacher organizations to produce added funds at all levels of government, and to establish a system of priorities for improvements effecting pupil achievement.

The first priority should be total improvement of ghetto elementary schools. The More Effective Schools plan, or an improved version of it, should be immediately instituted in the 25 percent of urban elementary schools which serve ghetto pupils. It may even be necessary to declare a moratorium on improvement in middle-class schools until this essential reform is accomplished.

Other priorities would include profession-wide limitation of maximum class sizes, establishment of a 4-period instructional day, expansion of facilities for treating and handling disruptive children, and encouragement of inservice study and research. While the urgency of these improvements

would be determined by their presumed effect on student achievement, we may boldly consider them from their effect on teachers.

Educational success cannot be accomplished by administrative fiat. What happens between teachers and pupils is crucial, and if we take the position that all pupils must be educated, regardless of the handicaps implanted by an imperfect social order, it is the teacher side of the equation which must be changed -- and this can only be accomplished by making the job of teaching intrinsically more attractive and more productive than it now is.